

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 23

INTRODUCED BY L. MOSS

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR A STATEWIDE EFFORT BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES TO DEVELOP, COORDINATE, AND PROMOTE ACTIVITIES THAT CONNECT MONTANA YOUTH WITH THE OUTDOORS TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF OUR CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES.

WHEREAS, numerous studies document that a lack of time spent outdoors contributes to the negative cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development of children, in addition to hindering their resiliency and ability to manage stress; and

WHEREAS, children in Montana are following a national trend of decreasing participation in outdoor recreational activities in favor of more sedentary and electronically-oriented indoor activities, putting them at risk for higher rates of attention deficit disorder, obesity, and lower ecological literacy; and

WHEREAS, over half of Montana 7th and 8th graders reported watching 2 or more hours of television on an average school day and 35% reported playing video games or using a computer for nonschool-related activities for 2 or more hours on an average school day; and

WHEREAS, the percentage of overweight or obese Montana high school students rose from 17% in 1999 to 23% in 2007; and

WHEREAS, less than one-third of 7th and 8th graders and less than one-quarter of high school students in Montana meet the recommended daily physical activity level of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity; and

WHEREAS, a recent survey found that of United States citizens 16 years or older who participated in at least one human-powered, outdoor recreational activity, including hiking, bicycling, or canoeing, in the past 2 years, 90% began participating in outdoor activities when they were 5 to 18 years of age; and

WHEREAS, students participating in some form of outdoor education at school consistently score higher on standardized tests than students who do not; and

WHEREAS, connecting children to nature through natural science, wildlife, agricultural, and environmental education programs provides rich critical thinking, complex decisionmaking, and community

1 service opportunities, as well as a foundation for lifelong learning; and

2 WHEREAS, involving children in outdoor physical activities can improve their physical, mental, and  
3 emotional well-being; and

4 WHEREAS, the abundant natural resources and wild places in Montana provide ready outdoor  
5 classrooms for hands-on discovery and intellectual inquiry on an individual and collaborative basis; and

6 WHEREAS, some schools, agencies, tribes, and organizations in Montana currently provide quality  
7 natural science, wildlife, agricultural, and environmental education with teacher training aligned to state learning  
8 requirements; and

9 WHEREAS, the quality of life in Montana depends on the ability to connect children with our existing  
10 resources, now and in the future, to better understand, appreciate, and enjoy Montana.

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12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
13 STATE OF MONTANA:

14 That the 61st Legislature expresses support for a statewide effort to develop, coordinate, and promote  
15 activities that connect Montana youth with the outdoors to promote and improve the health and well-being of our  
16 citizens and communities.

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 61st Legislature recognizes the importance of collaboration  
18 between nonprofit organizations, private industry, and governmental agencies at all levels, including the  
19 Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the Department of Public Health and Human Services, the Department  
20 of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Board of Public Education, and the Office of Public Instruction, to  
21 develop and implement strategies and activities that connect Montana children with nature.

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 61st Legislature urges:

23 (1) the grassroots development of an ad hoc Montana children and nature advisory work group that will  
24 propose strategies for enhancing the accessibility and safety of close-to-home natural environments, providing  
25 structured and unstructured outdoor opportunities for play, recreation, learning, and scientific study, reducing  
26 barriers to participation in outdoor activities, raising healthy, active children, and further integrating nature into  
27 the formal education system; and

28 (2) that this group will present the 62nd Legislature and the Governor with a report on its findings.

29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send a copy of this resolution to the Governor.

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